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At Hayward schools, \$12 million cut, \$6 million to go

By Eric Kurhi
Oakland Tribune

Posted: 04/30/2010 12:00:00 AM PDT

HAYWARD — Trustees slashed more than \$12 million from the district budget Wednesday night, increasing class sizes, trimming support staff such as counselors and nurses, and moving most of the adult school's funds to the pot for K-12 education.

One reprieve that came from the meeting — which ended at 1:30 a.m. Thursday — involved school buses. Money that would have been saved by increasing the distance that kids would have to walk to school was instead taken from the adult school budget.

Board members requested that staff investigate alternate cuts in an effort to spare counselors, nurses or elementary school music programs, but because of the need for immediate action, voted to eliminate some positions and music in grades 5 and 6.

"It's not to say we can promise anything," board President Paul Frumkin said. "But we asked the district to come back with some options and strategies to save some of those."

Three board members approved the cuts, with Sheila Sims abstaining and Luis Reynoso dissenting.

Sims said it wasn't fair for the adult school to take a hit whenever cuts are required. Numerous supporters of the adult school attended the meeting.

Adult school Principal Ana Solomon said the school will survive with its \$1.2 million allocation — down from \$6.6 million at the start of 2009 — by focusing on programs that bring in revenue, such as courses in English as a Second Language and physical

education.

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More than 40 percent of the school's funding comes from grants, Solomon said. The school hopes to further wean itself from the district, but needs time to

pursue alternate funding sources, she said.

Preserving the counselors, nurses and elementary school music would mean \$1 million would have to be cut elsewhere. That would likely mean the end of all adult school programs, Solomon said.

"If we're cut completely, it's gone," she said. "And when it's gone, it's very hard to get back."

Despite the approved cuts, another \$6 million still must be chopped before a balanced budget can be submitted in June. It is unclear where those cuts will come from, but the district hopes for cooperation from labor unions.

Separately, trustees voted to borrow \$12 million from the school construction bond that voters passed in 2008. The money is needed to make payroll because promised state funds have yet to be received.

The district has a \$180 million budget, with \$120 million in the general fund.

A host of speakers addressed the meeting, which required that side rooms be opened to accommodate an overflow crowd. The speakers talked about the need to keep various programs.

Interim Superintendent Janis Duran reiterated that if the drastic cuts are not made, the district will go into state receivership, which means the board, administrators and the community would lose control over how the district would be run.

"I don't mean to frighten anyone, but understand how serious this is," she said. "Often, the first thing to go is all music programs, everything that's not a core curriculum. "... They can close schools. They do not have to hold sessions asking the public what they want and the board is not asked for an opinion.

"I will tell you it impacts the entire community, not just the schools. It will impact real estate, and the City Council. It will impact the 'Who we are' of the community."



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